



Section 9: Working with AgrAbility

Mission	140
Partners	140
Services	141
How to Contact AgrAbility	141
The Toolbox Assistive Technology Database Techniques and Suggestions	141
Frequently Asked Questions	144
AgrAbility Organization	144
AgrAbility Resources	145
AgrAbility Services	145
Assistive Technology Services for Farmers and Ranchers in Oklahoma	148
Summary	149

Working with AgrAbility

Learning Objective(s):

1. Learn about the National AgrAbility Project (NAP) and be familiar with the services it provides.
2. Know how to contact NAP.
3. Familiarize yourself with resources available on the NAP website, including The Toolbox Assistive Technology Database.



The following information is excerpted from the National AgrAbility Project website. You can go directly to the website by following this link:

www.agrability.org

Mission

AgrAbility understands how the life and work of an agricultural worker can be impacted because of disabilities. The purpose of AgrAbility is to support farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers so that they can enjoy a high quality life and continue to succeed in rural America, along with their families and communities.

AgrAbility assists individuals working in agriculture who experience a large array of disabling conditions like arthritis, spinal cord injuries, brain and head injury, amputations, and impairments in vision and hearing as well as many other impairments or disabling diseases.

Partners

The National AgrAbility Project (NAP) is funded through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). AgrAbility was established in the 1990 Farm Bill, and funded projects started in 1992. The program has been very successful in assisting farmers and ranchers with disabilities or health impairments continue working in production agriculture.

NAP is led by the Breaking New Ground Resource Center at Purdue University in partnership with Goodwill of the Finger Lakes, the Arthritis Foundation: Heartland Region, the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign, and Colorado State University.



Services

AgrAbility works to provide the following services:

- **Education to farm, government, health, and rehabilitation service providers** on accommodating disabilities as well as prevention of secondary injuries through research related to disability and agriculture and the development of evidence-based resources.
- **Professional development opportunities** for consumers as well as networking activities to increase public awareness and allow for sharing of information and resources with non-AgrAbility individuals and organizations.
- **Consultative services and technical assistance** such as on-site assessments, toll-free helpline, and moderation or adaptation of the agricultural operation, buildings, equipment and/or tools to agricultural workers with disabilities
- **Information and resources** to members of other national and international agricultural and health-related organizations in order to assist a larger array of farmers and ranchers with disabilities.

How to Contact AgrAbility

National AgrAbility Project
Breaking New Ground Resource Center
Purdue University
ABE Bldg., 225 South University Street
West Lafayette IN 47907-2093
Phone: (800) 825-4264 (toll-free)
www.agrability.org

The Toolbox Assistive Technology Database Techniques and Suggestions

One of the most used resources on the NAP website is The Toolbox. The Toolbox contains current and relevant assistive technologies, modification ideas, and publications by the Breaking New Ground Resource Center. Product descriptions and contact information are included in the database along with techniques and suggestions.

The Toolbox has publications on:

- **Hand Controls for Agricultural Equipment**
Provides agricultural workers with disabilities suggestions, techniques and guidelines for designing hand-activated controls that allow for operation of agricultural equipment safely and efficiently. Agricultural equipment discussed includes self-propelled machines such as tractors and combines as well as other machines.
- **Prosthetic and Worksite Modifications for Farmers or Ranchers with Upper Extremity Amputations**
Focuses on the challenges experienced by active farmers and ranchers using upper limb prosthetic devices and discusses some of the solutions they have developed in order to overcome these problems.

Leisure and Play for People with Disabilities

- **Selection and Operation of All-Terrain Vehicles for Farmers or Ranchers with Physical Impairments**

Presents agricultural workers with disabilities criteria to keep in mind when selecting the safest all-terrain vehicle (ATV) for his/her individual situation. This report also provides tips for ATV safe handling and operation.

- **Farming or Ranching Following a Spinal Cord Injury**

Provides suggestions for improving accessibility of the agricultural workplace for individuals with a spinal cord injury (SCI).

- **New Concepts in Manlift Attachments for Tractors and Combines**

Provides information for modifying a piece of machinery to help individuals make an informed decision concerning the lift concept that is best suited to fit their needs. It also discusses how to consult with a rehabilitation engineer, an experienced assistive technology fabricator, and others that have made similar modifications.

- **Improving Worksite Mobility for Farmers or Ranchers with Physical Disabilities**

Discusses barriers that exist for individuals with mobility impairments, offers solutions for specific mobility problems, and provides information on other resources related to outdoor mobility.

- **Farming or Ranching with a Visual Impairment**

Defines visual impairment conditions and discusses what farming or ranching with a visual impairment is like through seven individuals who experience some degree of vision loss. Each case study provides

detailed information about the individual's work, visual condition, modifications made to help them as well as personal concerns and attitudes related to farming or ranching with a visual impairment.

- **Assistive Communication Devices for Farmers or Ranchers with Physical Disabilities**

Presents communication devices as they relate to farming or ranching with a disability by providing descriptions of the devices, approximate costs, and advantages and disadvantages. It is not intended to recommend any particular communication device.

- **Farming or Ranching with Cerebral Palsy**

Summarizes what cerebral palsy (CP) is, discusses how common it is, how it affects an individual, what problems it creates for individuals who live and work on farms or ranches, and discusses what can be done to help agricultural workers. Strategies being used by individuals with CP are also included.

- **Making Your House Accessible**

Assists individuals with mobility impairments evaluate their housing situation and offers them suggestions (no-cost, low-cost, and more expensive alternatives) to make it more accessible. Additional sources as well as possible funding sources are also included.

- **Farming or Ranching with a Respiratory Impairment**

Provides information on some respiratory hazards and the illnesses that can develop because of these hazards. It also provides suggestions on how to prevent such impairments and how one can continue



farming or ranching if an impairment does develop. Resources with additional information are also listed.

- **Farming or Ranching with a Hearing Impairment**

Provides information regarding the types of hearing loss most frequently experienced by farmers and ranchers and discusses ways to prevent noise-induced hearing loss. Specific examples of work strategies and technologies for accommodating a hearing loss are also included.

- **Farming or Ranching with a Lower Extremity Amputation**

Provides definitions related to amputations and prostheses and lists examples of prosthetic devices, and discusses shared characteristics of most all lower limb amputees in addition to problems they may face and potential solutions to resolve these problems.

- **Accessing Horses and Horse-Drawn Vehicles**

Presents safe as well as cost-effective approaches that allow individuals with disabilities to use horses and horse-drawn vehicles for different purposes such as therapy, work, or pleasure.

- **Farming or Ranching with a Back Impairment**

Defines what a back impairment is, some of the reasons why they occur, and ways to prevent and treat back impairments. It also lists equipment that is available that can decrease the incidence of a back impairment and shares the stories of farmers and ranchers with back impairments along with their advice for other agricultural workers.

- **Potential Health and Safety Risks of Farming or Ranching with a Disability**

Lists some of the more serious risks associated with agricultural production with a disability, including those related to do-it-yourself modifications. It also provides possible solutions and lists resources for additional safety and health information.

- **Accessible Recreation**

Provides information about different types of recreation and related assistive technology that is available for agricultural workers and individuals who live in rural communities that experience physical disabilities.

- **Rural Church Accessibility**

Discusses physical and communication barriers in rural churches and provides possible solutions as well as discusses ways to encourage families of individuals with disabilities who are part of a church.

The Toolbox contains a database with a wide variety of assistive technology. Assistive technology is organized into different categories, which include:

- Agriculture-Related Enterprises
- Crop and Materials Handling/Storage
- Lawn and Garden
- Livestock Handling and Housing
- Outdoor Mobility
- Outdoor Recreation
- Safety and Health
- Shops and Shop Tools
- Skid-Steer Loaders and Other Self-Propelled Equipment

Leisure and Play for People with Disabilities

- Tractors and Combines
- Trucks
- Utility Vehicles, ATVs, and other Off-Road Vehicles

Frequently Asked Questions

AgrAbility Organization



What is the AgrAbility Project?

AgrAbility increases the likelihood that individuals with disabilities and their families engaged in production agriculture (AgrAbility's clients) become more successful. The program supports cooperative projects in which state Cooperative Extension Services (CES) based at either 1862 or 1890 land-grant institutions subcontract to private, nonprofit disability organizations. Measures of success may include improvements in clients' financial stability or access to life activities and in the capacity of the states and regions to deliver services this population requires in a timely and satisfying manner.



What is the National AgrAbility Project?

The National AgrAbility Project (NAP) has a dual mission. The NAP provides limited, on-demand services in geographic areas without funded state and regional AgrAbility projects (SRAPs). However, more significant to the success of the program, the NAP helps funded SRAPs and unfunded affiliated AgrAbility projects become more successful at meeting their objectives. The NAP typically produces or recommends

education materials, forums, networking tactics, assistance protocols, and marketing products SRAPs adopt for their own use. The NAP connects all SRAPs by moderating information sharing forums as well as identifying, promoting, and addressing opportunities and challenges for AgrAbility. It also recognizes and capitalizes on economies of scale and evaluates the program's impacts annually.



Where is the National AgrAbility Project located?

Purdue University and the Breaking New Ground Resource Center, located in West Lafayette, IN, are honored to provide the current home for the National AgrAbility Project. For nearly three decades, Purdue has been providing services to farmers, ranchers, agricultural workers, and their families impacted by disability. This has included direct services such as on-site assessments, toll-free helpline, research related to disability and agriculture, development of evidence-based resources for use by consumers and rehabilitation professionals, public awareness activities, professional development opportunities, and development and documentation of assistive technology appropriate for agricultural workplaces. Being a partner with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) AgrAbility Program to host the National AgrAbility Project provides a wonderful opportunity to expand and enhance these activities through working directly with all of the state and regional AgrAbility projects. In addition, being a host for the National AgrAbility Project provides added opportunities to reach out to over half the states



that currently do not have AgrAbility projects through NAP's partnerships with Goodwill International, The Arthritis Foundation, and other organizations. Ultimately, the goal is to provide farmers, ranchers, agricultural workers, and their family members with disabilities nationwide the opportunity, to achieve a lifestyle of high quality and satisfaction.

 **How can I receive AgrAbility services if I live in a state that does not have an AgrAbility project?**

The National AgrAbility Project will provide information and resources for people in states without an AgrAbility project.

AgrAbility Resources

 **Are AgrAbility Program materials available in alternative formats?**

Generally, yes. Most AgrAbility Program materials can be made available in alternative formats such as Braille or audiotape if requested in advance. Due to limited demand only very few items are kept in stock in alternative formats. If you are in need of an alternative format for any of the AgrAbility materials, contact the National AgrAbility Project at (800) 825-4264.

 **Does AgrAbility provide direct funding to clients?**

Generally, no. The provisions of the legislation do not allow for either the NAP or the state and regional AgrAbility projects to provide direct funding to clients related to worksite accommodation, starting a new enterprise, or

paying for assistive technology. Currently, both the NAP and state and regional projects have, as funding has allowed, provided scholarships to cover travel-related costs of clients attending the National AgrAbility Training Workshop. Check with NAP AgrAbility project directors for additional details.

 **Does the National AgrAbility Project have a website?**

Yes, www.agrability.org.

AgrAbility Services

 **Are there costs associated with receiving services from the state, regional, or national AgrAbility projects?**

No, state and regional AgrAbility projects (SRAPs) are not allowed by their contracts with USDA-NIFA to charge clients for services provided that are within the scope of the AgrAbility Program guidelines contained in the federal legislation. AgrAbility staff may recommend resources, assistive technology, or expert consulting services such as from a professional engineer that may have costs associated with them.

 **Do I have to live on the farm to receive services?**

No. Anyone with a disease, disability, or disorder and who is engaged in farming, ranching, or in other agriculture-related occupations is eligible to receive services.

Leisure and Play for People with Disabilities



Do I need to show proof of U.S. citizenship to receive AgrAbility services?

No.



For what kind of disabilities does the AgrAbility Program provide services?

Farmers, ranchers, their family members, and agricultural workers, including seasonal and migrant farm workers are eligible to receive AgrAbility services. In addition, those engaged in agricultural-related occupations, forestry, fishing, and lawn care will find many of the resources available through AgrAbility applicable to their workplaces.

AgrAbility serves individuals with a wide range of disability types including physical, cognitive, or illness-related, and AgrAbility resources are available that address the needs of individuals with:

- Amputations
- Arthritis
- Back pain
- Blindness or low vision
- Cancer
- Cardiac conditions
- Cerebral palsy
- Deafness or hearing impairments
- Diabetes
- Mental retardation
- Multiple sclerosis
- Muscular dystrophy

- Post-polio syndrome
- Respiratory problems
- Spinal cord injuries
- Stroke
- Traumatic brain injury

AgrAbility is not capable of providing comprehensive assistance for all disability-types but is often able to refer individuals to better-equipped sources of information and assistance.



How do I encourage my community to become more accessible?

To advocate for personal rights or form disability coalitions, contact a nearby center for independent living and involve others interested in disability rights.



How do I know what equipment will best fit my needs?

The AgrAbility projects are a network of information resources. This network includes community-based experts such as extension specialists, rehabilitation therapists, independent living specialists, and others who have attended training sessions. The AgrAbility management team members, advisory committee members, NAP technical consultants, and peer mentors are also available to share research, experience, and insight.



How much information do I have to share regarding personal finances?

You decide what information you are willing to share. Staff working with the program are professionals and will not gather unnecessary information, nor will they share information without your permission or violate your right to privacy.

I do not receive Social Security funds. Can I still receive services from AgrAbility?

Yes. Services provided are not linked to Social Security Disability insurance programs.

Is there a cost for the services of the National AgrAbility Project?

Generally, no. All consultation services provided via mail, email, or telephone by the staff of the National AgrAbility Project and its partners are provided without cost. In some cases, certain print or audio-visual resources or bulk quantities of resources are available at a nominal charge. In addition, reimbursement of expenses is requested when NAP staff participate in certain activities where travel is required.

Is there any recourse if I am dissatisfied with the services I have received from an AgrAbility staff member?

If you are unhappy with the services received from an AgrAbility staff member, you should contact the state or regional project director at the land-grant institution hosting the project. If you remain unsatisfied contact the Director of

Extension at the hosting land-grant institution. If you still cannot resolve the issue, contact the AgrAbility Program Manager at USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

This position is currently being filled by:

Aida Balsano, National Program Leader
National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA
800 9th Street, SW Room 4433
Washington, DC 20024
Phone: (202) 720-4436
Phone alt: (202) 690-1899
Fax: (202) 720-9366
Email: abalsano@nifa.usda.gov

What is assistive technology?

Assistive technology for those who live in farming/ranching communities includes any kind of device, modification, or service that will help an individual with a disability work and live more independently in the rural setting.

An assistive technology device is any item or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities, allowing them to function independently in any setting including recreation, education, employment, and daily living.

Assistive technology enables an individual with a disability to complete tasks within an agricultural setting. Examples of assistive technology include:

- Tractor seat with added back support
- Walking canes
- Extended tractor steps
- Tractor lift
- Turny seat

Leisure and Play for People with Disabilities

- Universal steps
- Wheelchair lift
- Speech recognition software



Where can I find more information about AgrAbility services and resources?

To discover more about AgrAbility services, computer-based and printed resources, operation, regional coverage, funding, and assistive technology databases, go to:

www.agrability.org

www.breakingnewground.info

www.agrabilityproject.org



Who qualifies for AgrAbility services?

All farmers, ranchers, agricultural workers, and members of their families are eligible to receive AgrAbility services. This includes both seasonal and migrant farm workers. Other occupations that have been served include loggers, fishermen, gardeners, lawn maintenance personnel, Christmas tree growers, truckers, agricultural implement service technicians, and wood workers.



Will other people find out I have a disability?

The AgrAbility projects provide information to agricultural producers with disabilities and their families that will enable them to improve or restore agricultural productivity. Your neighbors may notice that you are able to perform tasks that you formerly were prevented from pursuing. If they ask how the recovery happened, we hope you will share your experience with them,

but you are not required to do so. You may decide to mentor farmers with a disability in your community, and if so, you will become a valuable resource to others.

Assistive Technology Services for Farmers and Ranchers in Oklahoma

Although Oklahoma no longer will have a funded state AgrAbility project, the state continues to have expertise in farm and ranch assistive technologies, environmental modifications, and disability resources through Oklahoma ABLE Tech, an affiliated program of Oklahoma State University.

Oklahoma ABLE Tech has comprehensive information on assistive technology, durable medical equipment exchange programs, funding for assistive technology, equipment loans, grants and loans for home and workplace assistive technology, free smoke alarm program for the visually or hearing impaired, accessible voting, children and youth services, and much more. The program has an excellent reputation in advocacy, partnership, and information across the state of Oklahoma. To contact Oklahoma ABLE Tech:

Oklahoma State University

Department of Wellness

1514 W. Hall of Fame

Stillwater, OK 74078

Phone: (405) 744-9748

Toll-free: (888) 885-5588

Email: abletech@okstate.edu

Website: <http://okabletech.okstate.edu>

Office Hours & Additional Information:

Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Appointments are required.



Summary

AgrAbility promotes success in agriculture for farmers, ranchers, and their family members who have conditions of disability. Many farmers and ranchers have been provided with information, resources, advocacy, and recommendations in partnership with AgrAbility so they can remain working in production agriculture. AgrAbility continues to be a go-to resource for agricultural producers and workers who want to work.

